



# Consumer Corner

by Illinois Attorney General LISA MADIGAN



## New Law Balances Needs of Cold Sufferers with Efforts to Stop Meth Epidemic

Methamphetamine (meth) is a highly addictive and destructive drug made in toxic labs that endanger communities across Illinois. A new law I proposed this year, the Methamphetamine Precursor Control Act (MPCA), will cut off meth makers' access to certain cold medicines containing meth's key ingredients, ephedrine or pseudoephedrine (PSE). This month's column explains why the new law is necessary and how it will affect the way you buy cold medicine.

**Q:** My drugstore now requires customers to show identification and sign a log before they can purchase cold medicine. The store also moved all cold medications behind the pharmacy counter. My pharmacist says the new restrictions were put in place to fight the meth epidemic. What do these restrictions mean for the average buyer of cold medicine?

**A:** While you will still be able to purchase your preferred cold medicines, starting January 15, 2006, the Methamphetamine Precursor Control Act (MPCA) restricts the sale of products containing ephedrine or PSE in the following ways:

- **Storage of products.** All products containing ephedrine or PSE, except for convenience packages, must be kept behind pharmacy counters. Convenience packages may be stored and sold away from pharmacies as long as they are kept behind store counters or in locked cases.
- **Identification and log requirements.** A consumer wishing to buy products containing ephedrine or PSE without a prescription must show a government-issued photo ID and sign a log showing information such as the name and address of the person and the date and time of the purchase. This information will be kept confidential but may be shown to law enforcement if necessary.
- **Purchase limits.** A consumer may buy no more than two packages of products containing ephedrine or PSE in a single transaction and no more than one convenience package in a 24-hour period. A consumer may buy no more than 7500 milligrams of ephedrine or PSE in a 30-day period, which is slightly more than a 30-day supply for an adult using it daily.
- **No sales to minors.** A consumer must be 18 years of age or older to buy any product containing ephedrine or PSE.

**Please note:** If you or members of your family have chronic allergies or other conditions that lead you to take ephedrine or PSE products every day, ask your doctor for a prescription. Consumers with a valid prescription for ephedrine or PSE are not bound by the restrictions contained in the MPCA.

**Q:** Why are the Meth Precursor Control Act (MPCA) restrictions necessary?

**A:** The restrictions imposed by the MPCA are necessary for two primary reasons:

- **They will significantly reduce the number of meth labs in Illinois, reducing crime and better protecting our communities.** States with strict controls on the sale of ephedrine and PSE have witnessed dramatic declines in the number of meth labs. As the number of meth labs declines, so does the risk of fires, explosions, property damage, environmental contamination, and injuries to children, law enforcement officers, and other first responders – and so does the crushing burden these labs impose on law enforcement, local governments, and social service agencies.
- **They ensure that meth makers from surrounding states do not come to Illinois.** When states surrounding Illinois placed similar restrictions on the sale of ephedrine and PSE in 2005, meth makers from those states began coming to Illinois, bringing with them meth, dangerous meth-making materials, and a tendency toward violence and crime. Now, with similar restrictions in Illinois, meth makers will no longer have any reason to threaten Illinois communities.

**For more information on meth and the MPCA, please visit the Attorney General's MethNet at [www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov/methnet](http://www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov/methnet).**